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HUTS AND HOMES OF RURAL CHINA

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Huts and Homes of Rural China

AN inside view of the life of the farming people of China is afforded, by way of introduction to the subject, in a survey recently completed at the University of Nanking. The next few paragraphs are condensed from what has been written by John Lossing Buck, of the University's department of agricultural economics, farm management and rural sociology. It was under his direction that the studies were made. They are described in detail in Mr. Buck's comprehensive volume, *Chinese Farm Economy*, published in 1931 by the University of Chicago Press. Their information is in general typical of all of rural China, though the survey embraced only seventeen localities, in seven provinces of North and East Central China. It covered 21,000 acres, and touched the lives of 17,000 farming people.

Small Farms and Plain Farmhouses

The average farm is, to the western farmer's thinking, appallingly small, measuring only a little over five acres. The farmhouse is seldom near the land. Farmers in China live clustered in little villages, from which they go out to their fields. The type of farmhouse differs very much in the two regions studied. In North China the houses are smaller and are usually made of tamped earth and are covered with thatch. In East Central China they are larger and made of brick, and have a tile roof. But certain conditions are common to both; there is little attempt at any beautification or even at the comfort of home, and the living rooms are often the granaries where the crops are stored when they are harvested, and sometimes where even the animals are housed. The dooryard is often the threshing floor, and poor sanitation and the proximity of pigpens to the wells is almost universal.

The number of days of labor on the farm was found, taking all family and hired labor into consideration, to be only 194 working days of ten hours each a year. Animals are idle much of the time. Many farmers do not own animals at all, but depend on borrowing from richer neighbors, or only own on shares with other farmers. On the farm an animal works only about 63 ten-hour days a year. It is a common sight to see a man toiling in the sun while his beast lies resting in the shade of a tree. Of the labor on the farm two-fifths is performed by members of the family, one-fifth by hired labor; and another two-fifths, approximately, is by the operator himself. Of this hired and family labor a little over one-fifth is by women—31.6 per cent in East Central China and only

11.8 per cent in North China, where foot binding is still prevalent. Children do about 6.1 per cent of the hired and family labor.

Work Lags When Winter Comes

The months of sowing and of harvest are too heavy, and during the winter months there is almost a total lack of work for man and beast. This lack of work during the winter limits the income. In one district the women and children make winter shoes of felt from cows' hair. In some places it is a regular practice for the young men of the family to go to the cities to find work. On the larger farms the profits are higher and labor efficiency greater, than on the smaller farms. A farmer on a large farm works with nearly twice as much efficiency as he does on a small one, and this applies to animal as well as to human labor.

Farmers Many, Acres Few

Why are the farms so universally small? An over-supply of farmers. There are not a sufficient number of industries developed as yet in China to draw the surplus of men off the land, and the consequence is that with each succeeding generation the land is divided and subdivided until it is now in plots too small for the best economic unit. This is one of the most irrefutable proofs of the over-population of the country. The density of population in North China is 621 per square mile and in East Central China 839. These figures may be compared with 78 in Denmark, with 1,238 in Japan, and with 49 in the United States.

Of the present generation of farmers less than one-half have ever attended school, and of the generation of their children 75 per cent are not in any school. Besides some education, however, a little money is expended in recreation, chiefly at the time of the New Year holiday, and consisting of tea drinking and gambling. The cost of recreation per family for those who reported it was \$1.01, and this may be compared with \$22.50 for the farm family in the United States.

Food, Clothes, Shelter—Nothing More..

The standards of the two regions, when compared with those of other countries, are too low. The Chinese farmer has to spend too much of his income on the bare essentials, and has even then nothing but food unvarying and lacking in nutriment, clothing of the cheapest sort, and a home which is nothing more than a shelter. The chief cause of this low standard is without doubt the small size of the farm and the density of the population which makes it necessary. Mere economic relief will not greatly improve the farm-

er's standard of living. More money may simply mean more gambling, or some such useless expenditure, unless the burden of ignorance is removed from the people. Poor communications have kept the rural people isolated; their inadequate education has kept them ignorant, and there has been little to open and enlarge their minds to those things which are necessary to the happy and fruitful human life.

In Need of Help for All of Life

The Chinese farmer has by the trial-and-error method arrived at many sound and practical conclusions adapted to his situation. He needs help, however, in adjusting his cropping systems to the now changing demands of markets and prices, to dietary needs, and in some cases even to soil and climatic conditions; and in order to increase his yields he needs help in procuring better seeds, in control of insects and pests, and in more intensive methods of fertilization and cultivation. Improved transportation and credit and better marketing facilities would also do much to aid him. But besides these he lacks a vital and satisfying life.

NORTH CHINA AND ITS RURAL REGIONS

In the territory for which the Presbyterian Church in Hopei is responsible about 4,000 villages and towns are located. Only seven organized churches are found in the entire district.

Outside the large cities, all Chinese live in villages. No one dares to live on his land, from fear of thieves and bandits. A village is simply a number of houses erected along one or two streets, with each family shut off from all the others by mud walls. Sometimes there is nothing more, except a small pond at the end of the street, which has been formed from digging out the earth with which to build houses and walls. If a village has started on the road to progress, however, there may be a food shop or an inn. A store or two may manage to exist, selling a few things most often used in the homes. In the larger trading villages an increasing supply of foreign and modern articles are for sale. The market and the fair still keep the merchants traveling from place to place with their wares; a market town usually has a busy market once every five days. All the rest of the time a village, from outside the walls, looks much like a dead place.

Home Life on a Chinese "Kang"

Behind the walls, in the courtyard or compound, is found the real home life. Living conditions are very primitive. Most of the houses are built of mud, with dirt floors and almost no furniture,

much of the life being spent on the kang or brick platform which serves as bed and which usually occupies half or more of the principal room. The people eat very poor foods, and their dresses are generally made of blue cotton cloth. The vast majority of the villagers in this district must be classed as poor, each family having only a few dollars of actual money to spend in a year, and being obliged to be most careful of all food supplies.

A picture of a well-to-do family will give an idea of the family system. The Wang family numbers twenty-nine members, in four generations, all living within the same wall but having separate living quarters. Of two brothers, one had four sons; the other was childless. The four sons all have families, three of them having grandchildren. The father of the four boys is not living, so his brother is the head of the family. The latter now has, by a second wife, a young daughter of 13. This makes her much younger than her nephews and gives rise to a curious situation.

Her Majesty, the Mother-in-Law

The wife of the head of the family governs the household, and apportions the work of each of her "daughters-in-law." These are women as old as or older than herself. When the food is to be prepared she must bring out all the supplies. These women of 50 years or more are not to be trusted to measure out oil or vegetables! In her absence the women must consult her 13-year-old daughter; they would not dare to add even a pinch of salt without her word. The head of the house weighs out so much cotton to each family, and the women spin and weave it and make the clothes for their own families. There is very little liberty of action, for all the work, the gardens, and land are in common. One who wishes to take time to go to church is accused of shirking. The family may be wealthy, but only the head has access to any ready money for incidental spending.

As the four older women wait on their aunt hand and foot, so three of them have daughters-in-law to serve them in like manner. The reason for early marriages is usually the need of a daughter-in-law to do the work. A bride does not have the happy prospect of making her own home and doing her own work. Her mission is to serve her mother-in-law. The sewing and making of shoes for the entire family falls naturally to her lot. When a bride goes home on a visit, she always has an ample allotment of sewing to keep her busy during all her absence. To a westerner, this patriarchal family system would be galling in its restraint. But the sense of security and absence of responsibility are very precious to easterners.

Every Woman Is Miller and Spinner

Chinese country folks literally live off their land. The corn, wheat and millet raised is stored in huge baskets or earthenware jars, and is ground by hand into cereal and flour as needed day by day. If the year has been a good one for cotton, all the women folk are busy, early and late making the spinning wheel hum. Often cold weather catches a family unprepared, and they must shiver until cloth can be woven, dyed and made up into wadded winter garments.

Cornstalks, grass, leaves, straw, in fact anything unedible that grows on the land, furnishes fuel for cooking meals and heating the kang in cold weather. The warm kang is bed by night and work-room by day. Almost all the work, except actual cooking of the food and grinding of meal, is done seated cross-legged on its comfortably warm surface. Cooking is done in a huge iron kettle upheld by a frame of bricks. The staple food is a cereal—millet or corn meal, or wheat eaten with a bit of salt vegetable. Bread is steamed, or baked in flat cakes as a special treat. Meat, usually pork, is a rarity.

Weddings, funerals and temple-fair theatricals offer the only excitement or respite from endless work. If the wedding or funeral is in the immediate family, of course there is a tremendous amount of extra work. But if in a relative's family, there is only prospect of a feast or other entertainment.

A Somber Life for a Chinese Girl

Children are the hope and despair of every family. Sons are above price; daughters are dreaded as a financial encumbrance. Now, however, the occasional girl who receives an education and rises to economic independence as teacher or nurse is slowly upturning the age-old tradition, and the startling statement is sometimes heard that a daughter is "as good as a son"!

Girls and young married women are not supposed to be seen on the street, though families vary in the strictness with which this custom is observed. The universal exception is regarding temple-fair theatricals. On such occasions the ban is lifted, and all join the rabble that crowds promiscuously about the theater platform. Going decorously to church is so very modest in comparison that it is hard to realize that objection to it is really serious. But public opinion sanctioning one and frowning on the other, it is a notable break with custom when young women attend church.

Another restraint upon the family's activities is the necessity for leaving someone always to look after the house, as a precaution against thieving. It is a great act of faith for a little family to

lock their door and go to church, committing to the Lord the care of their home.

Where Sanitation is Still Unknown

Perhaps 90 per cent of the people have no idea of the meaning of the word sanitation. During the summer months hordes of flies reign supreme. The cost of a bit of netting to screen the windows seems prohibitive, and anyway it is hopeless to try to get rid of flies. The people have developed a remarkable degree of immunity, but nearly everyone suffers now and again from dysentery. Frequent pools of stagnant water breed mosquitoes and make malaria very common.

Bathing at home is almost unknown. During the summer season men may take baths once in a while in brooks or ponds, but many women never take a bath during their entire lives. Proper ventilation is practically unheard of. Most people close all doors and windows at night, even when the entire family sleeps together in one small room upon one brick bed. Eye infections are almost universal, almost everyone having trachoma or some milder trouble. There is no knowledge of disinfection, or of how these diseases spread. The result is that disease of all sorts runs triumphantly through the whole family. Malnutrition is responsible for much infant mortality. Thousands of babies pine away until they are "thrown out," as the expression is. Poor nutrition, also, is undoubtedly to blame for much of the very prevalent tuberculosis.

Torture a Cure for Every Ill

The multitude of physical ills without any hope of suitable relief is heartrending. The confidence of the vast majority is in the needle. The inserting of these great ugly things amounts almost to an occult science in which people trust implicitly. Undernourished babies are declared to have kalaazar and needles are stuck between the fingers. There is a designated place to stick a needle in order to cure any one pain! The fact that blindness, loss of speech or paralysis sometimes result does not dampen the enthusiasm of the deluded people. Foot binding is still very common, in spite of regulations of the government.

Everyone Toils That All May Live

The villager is a farmer trying to exist on land that is insufficient to support his growing family. When his family simply cannot exist on the land, he sets some of his sons to making bean curd or bread or some similar commodity, which is carried from village to village for sale. Here and there one sees a brick-kiln or a distil-

lery sending forth black smoke. Some wooden work is done, and sewing and rug manufacturing are engaged in by women. In the winter an entire village may turn to spinning and weaving cotton cloth, squatting beside the sunny side of a wall, or in cellars, to keep away from the cold.

No Time Left for Going to School

In China poverty has stood also for ignorance. Where people are gradually starving and freezing, education will be neglected. A Chinese minister who has spent some forty years in the country district estimates that 4 or 5 per cent of the men can read. One or two women out of 10,000 can do so. The pressure of the economic situation makes parents feel that every member of the clan must be a contributing part of the machine that tries to grind out a living for them. Not a child that can toddle around is too small for work, or can be spared to go to school. Leaves can be picked up and brought in for fuel, grass can be gathered for the same purpose, and the younger boys can vie with men too old for active work in gathering the fertilizer for the fields, following the carts and caravans and so keeping the roads wonderfully clean all the year round. In any village only a very few boys can attend school.

Besides the need for the boy's work, the outlay required for attendance at even the most primitive school practically rules out the possibility. Moreover, schools are still very scarce. In one section said to contain 200,000 people there are only 61 schools having the first three years of grammar school grade; only two having the fourth, fifth and sixth grades. There is no high school in the rural districts. All scholars who reach that stage must go to the large cities. During the past two or three years, however, many temples have been transformed into schools, and the government authorities have been zealous in pushing schools in the country districts. A few schools for girls have recently been opened. There are indications that the government will stress schools for girls.

Telling the Gospel Where No One Has Heard It

The evangelistic effort of the Mission is now directed almost entirely toward the untouched field. The Mission's paid evangelists are not assigned to any certain country chapel, but move from place to place in their ministry. Often they are divided into pairs, and live for a brief period in a town, usually in or near a market town. The men may live in an inn; the women find a home in which they are invited to stay. After ten days or two weeks, the evangelists leave, after having secured a small group agreeing to meet

each Sunday for worship. In one section during the year a missionary was able to form twenty such new groups. In another section the Chinese evangelists were sent out by twos to hold village classes of a week's duration each. Twenty-seven such classes were held during the fall and winter. The villages selected for classes were those in which a few Christians showed a desire to win their neighbors to Christ. After two or three years it is planned that the evangelists shall go only to villages where there are no Christians.

For a Church That is Self-Maintained

Places already opened are being revisited also. Those cultivated by men last year are now on the itinerary of the women evangelists. To establish a small group in a village that will meet together regularly for worship, at least one person capable of reading the Bible is essential. Finding and training such an individual is one of the main points of the program. An evangelist nurse has proved a splendid asset in opening new places. Many who come for physical healing are led to trust the Lord who gives also spiritual healing. An increasing amount of time is being given to training lay leaders. Some sections have a month's institute in the winter and two weeks in the summer. A three months' course for men leaders is planned.

The whole aim of the new work in the rural field is to establish truly indigenous churches; that is, those that shall be entirely independent of Mission funds and buildings, self-maintaining, self-propagating, and controlled only by Chinese.

Though among our 3,000,000 people there are seven organized churches and 70 or 80 small groups meeting regularly for worship, the unreached field is tremendous. With 85 per cent of China's hundreds of millions living in rural areas, the amount of work yet to be done is staggering.

A True Recital of Rural Evangelism

"A warm-hearted Christian, Mrs. Yuan, was anxious for her sister's family to hear the Gospel. So she secured an invitation for us to visit them for ten days. They lived in a large market town in which were no Christians.

"Our arrival attracted a large crowd of curiosity-seekers, to whom we were glad to preach. But it soon became evident that the family did not welcome these crowds, and we felt that they were not very happy to have us there. However, I gathered the people into the room set aside for my use, folding up my cot during the day to make room for them on the kang, which we heated to make

them comfortable. The family could not avoid hearing a great deal, and they soon began to ask intelligent questions about the truth.

"Mrs. Li, my serving woman, is a most effective co-worker, and she helped them to decide to destroy their gods. One was an oil painting that had hung on their wall for generations. It was taken down and thriftily washed out, the cloth being saved for a dust rag! The paper kitchen-gods were torn to bits.

"A young man was among those who daily listened on the outside. One day Mrs. Li brought him in to inquire the way of salvation. He had gone on the road to destruction, but the Lord had brought him to repentance. Mrs. Li explained to him that he ought to break off his cigarette habit, if he wanted to become a Christian. He agreed, but for a few days was most miserable from the craving. Then, one day, he was jubilant, and testified that the desire was gone, his cough was relieved, and he no longer had to lie abed, but felt like getting up and going to work! Two other young men also determined to follow the Lord."

A Woman As Leader of Business Men

"Our elderly host had two sons. The second son and his wife became enthusiastic believers. The latter urged me to go to her maiden home and preach. As we were starting out, a group of business men came in to ask me to preach to them. I explained that my work was with women, but since they earnestly desired to hear, I could not refuse to make plain to them the way of life. They listened most respectfully and requested books, which they were anxious to study and discuss. Before we left, six enrolled as believers, and many more professed to believe. 'We have never heard anything like this! How were we to know?' were frequent remarks.

"The little group agreed to meet for simple worship on Sunday. We hope that two men evangelists may soon visit the place and lead them into fuller knowledge of the truth."

NINGPO'S SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND

Recently I spent two weeks in the home of an industrious farmer. Grandfather Dzing, his oldest son and two hired men were busy cultivating vegetables in the field. Great-grandmother Dzing, 81 years of age, sat by her spinning wheel most of the day, spinning cotton thread. Grandmother Dzing was busy about many household duties for her large family, but was ever on the alert to snatch odd moments to weave a few more rows on a straw hat. The oldest granddaughter-in-law, also the second (a new bride in the home), two granddaughters, and a 10-year-old great-granddaughter sat,

day in and day out, busily weaving hats. When great-grandmother had sufficient thread spun the first granddaughter-in-law put it on the loom, and the click of shaft and shuttle was soon lost in a whole new bolt of cream-colored homespun cloth. Before long this will be seen hanging from the high racks above the dye-shop, no longer cream but dark blue. When we visit them next time several members of the family will appear in new garments, fresh though somber in hue. It is well that they are dark, for this happy people seems never to see dirt, and it knows no such word as sanitation! Most of the homes have dirty mud floors and thatched roofs. They tell me that if it were not for the hat-weaving industry they would often suffer hunger. But while this industry keeps the wolf from many a door, it also keeps the light from many a heart and salvation from many a soul, for it becomes a fascinating craze and the more money they make, the more they want!

Old Home Industries Give Place to New

One seldom sees the beautiful silk gowns of former days, for the silk-worm industry has given place to hat-weaving, and the silk gown to colorful calicos and rayons. Cotton in large quantities is grown and exported from this province. Knitting socks with hand machines gives employment to thousands of boys and girls. Other industries are coast fisheries, and extensive salt fields all along the shore. Whole villages subsist on some one or other variety of fish industry. Yuyao district is specially noted for its soy bean and soy sauce industry. The cotton mills and matting factories give work to many little children. But these industries rob the children of education. Few girls are given an opportunity to study. Government primary schools are in all the larger centers, but there are only three Mission schools.

Our rural area stretches along the south shore of Hangchow Bay some forty miles from east to west and twenty miles from north to south, with Yuyao, the center, as the hub, and canals as the spokes connecting all important towns. It has a population of 600,000 at least—which represents our responsibility in rural evangelism. Scattered over this area are twenty-two churches and chapels, with 1,560 communicants and 435 catechumens. The thirteen Sunday schools have an enrollment of 1,840. Two churches are entirely self-supporting. One-half of the churches are active, many of the members bringing in their neighbors and friends.

The Gospel Goes from Door to Door

At certain seasons evangelistic bands go to different centers to

hold open-air and street-chapel meetings. The Bible women do house-to-house visitation, inviting neighbors to one central court and telling the story of salvation, often using a picture scroll to draw attention. The women then listen longer and more intelligently, and respond to questions very satisfactorily. Using tract leaflets with a chorus or a hymn helps to draw an audience and to get attention. Calendars with Scripture texts are very useful, for they are pasted on the wall in a prominent place, and bring their messages to many guests in that home during the year. We have one small hospital.

But what are seven pastors, ten lay evangelists, five Bible women and four missionaries, among such throngs of people? We need several bands of specially trained Chinese young women, and a number of specially trained missionary advisers, just for work with the women in the homes. Perhaps it would be fair to say that 100,000 of the 600,000 people have in some way had an opportunity of hearing of the Gospel.

MARGARET B. DUNCAN.

UNTOUCHED REGIONS NEAR HANGCHOW

Hangchow field includes two large sections of territory, widely separated, one to the northwest of Hangchow, the other to the south. The first, called the Lower-Road field, is a strip about ten miles wide stretching northeast along the railway between Hangchow and Shanghai. It covers about 500 square miles of territory. There are three larger centers of work, each of which has branch centers. We have seven men workers, four Bible women, and about 650 Christians. Inadequately we are covering about 200 square miles; all the rest of the field is untouched.

Every Woman a Manufacturer

The Lower-Road field is on delta land, flat and very fertile. Though this region is very productive the farmers are poor because they are not able to cultivate more than about two acres per family. The principal crops are rice, wheat, cotton, hemp, sugar cane, beans, silk and sheep skins. In almost every home the members of the family carry on other home industries, which help in piecing out the family budget. Baskets are made from split bamboo in some homes. Rice straw is used to make rope and straw sandals. Some country girls make hats for the hat factories, the materials being sent out with instructions how they should be made. In Haining a great many women and girls go out to the river bank where the cargo boats come in from up river, and pick up bits of charcoal that drop from broken baskets. These bits are kept until a family

has collected several pounds, and then it is sold. Another interesting industry of women and girls is stripping the bark from logs that have floated down the river.

The Up-River field, about two days' journey to the northwest, has an area of about 900 square miles and a population of 900,000 to 1,000,000 people. Twelve organized groups and about 400 Christians are in this field. Two groups have primary school teachers to lead the Sunday services. There are two ordained men and two Chinese women evangelistic workers. These women go from group to group, holding classes and helping in any way they can to strengthen the church.

Indoors or Out, Each One Labors

This Up-River field, being quite mountainous, there is not enough tillable land to support the people in a very adequate way. Every member of the family must work in order to eke out a living. The main crops are rice, millet, wheat, buckwheat, corn, barley and beans. Many of the women work in the fields along with the men, planting, cultivating, gathering and threshing the crops. The women also have their household duties. One thinks of them as literally "hewers of wood and drawers of water." They carry water from the river, pond or public well in great wooden buckets holding about five gallons, one of which is carried on either end of a pole resting on the shoulder. During the slack season on the farms, the women weave cotton cloth for the family supply of clothing. This is done on a very crude loom made of wood. In the larger villages, stocking-knitting machines are found in many homes. These small hand machines can be rented, and the girls use their spare time in making stockings and socks, but the work is very poorly paid, only about two cents a pair. Straw matting, hats and straw sandals are made from rice and wheat straw. The soil in this district is very good for bricks and coarse pottery; one sees many kilns for burning clay.

Home Life As Farm People Know It

Most of our Christians in each field come from very humble homes in the country districts. One problem is how to reach the well-to-do farmers. A great many of our people live in thatched houses, but the majority in mud or brick houses with tile roofs. These are cheerless and uncomfortable, poorly ventilated and open to all kinds of weather. Housekeeping is a hopeless task, with mud floors and no ceiling to keep dirt and bits of matting from dropping constantly. The common middle room, which is used as a guest room and dining-room, is also the storeroom for silkworm racks,

big baskets for carrying grass or leaves, the winter's supply of rice, spinning wheel and loom, and all the hoes and rakes and other farm paraphernalia. Aside from the yearly washing that every piece of furniture gets just before the China New Year, not much dusting and cleaning is done.

When grandfather and grandmother, their sons and wives and all their children live together, many problems arise, such as the fair division of family earnings, authority in the home and discipline of the children. There is not much real home life. The farmers are up with the dawn and to bed with the chickens. The men and boys eat their meal, and hurry to work, and the women and girls eat afterwards, so there is little time for the family to be together. We are urging on the Christian families that they have family worship every evening before going to bed. The father usually knows how to read, and he could gather his family round him and not only worship with them but could teach his wife and children to read the Bible.

Animals Make Themselves at Home

In few rural homes is there any pretense at sanitation. Chickens, pigs and sheep live under the same roof as the humans and much too close for comfort. Flies, fleas, mosquitoes, rats and unnameable tiny pests abound. Disease of every kind is rampant. One often finds not only families but whole villages of people who have trachoma or other eye diseases, or scabies or other skin diseases. We often see lepers. Malaria and tuberculosis are very common. It is almost impossible for the people to avoid malaria, especially in a rice-growing section, because every rice field is a breeding place for hordes of mosquitoes, and the houses are not screened. A great many illnesses come through use of impure water and eating uncooked foods. Fertilizer used on all vegetables and mulberry groves drains directly into the canals, which makes it very unwise to use either uncooked or undercooked vegetables or unboiled water.

Even Education Brings Its Problems

Nearly all boys go to school, if only for a few years. Government primary schools are within reach of all the farms, with a few intermediate schools, and still fewer high schools. Formerly our Mission financed primary schools in connection with our chapels, but when the Nationalist government prohibited religious instruction, we closed them. One of the sad things about education for the country boy is that often it educates him away from his own people and farm work. An educated man in China cannot soil his hands; he must not demean himself by doing coarse work. So he leaves his

home, and finds a job in the city. Many of our promising young men are lost to the church because they have no way of supporting themselves in the country.

We aim to bring each woman into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. We have found by experience that it is much easier to teach women to read, and to teach them about hygiene and sanitation after they have come into this relationship. The new birth gives them a new vision, new aspirations, a new meaning to life, a new sense of their own needs, and a willingness to strive to supply these needs. Many women of 50, 60, and even older have learned to read their Bibles after they became Christians. It is difficult to interest them until they get a motive power strong enough to rouse them from their lethargy. We strive to teach the women enough characters to enable them to read understandingly their Bibles and hymnbooks. To this end, once or twice a year, we hold ten-day or two-week classes to which the women are invited, and it is amazing what progress is made in such a short time.

MRS. J. H. ARTHUR

SOOCHOW TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The Soochow country evangelistic field covers about 700 square miles, and has a population of approximately 800,000. It contains about twenty-five market towns, and hamlets and villages exist by the hundreds. Lying in the great Yangtse river delta, this field is one of the richest farming regions to be found anywhere. Canals furnish ample means for transportation, both of passengers and goods, and supply water for irrigation and fertilization. Droughts and heavy rains occasionally produce some hardships, but famines are practically unknown. In spring and summer the fields resemble immense flower gardens. Much vegetation lives throughout the entire year.

Industrious Yet in Poverty

The people are poor, but frugal and hard working. With the exception of "immigrants" from neighboring counties who live in houses of bamboo and matting with straw roofs, most of them live in brick houses with tile roofs. Most farmers have large families, and every member in some way helps to support the family.

Though some progress has been made in health and sanitation in the larger market towns, the villages and hamlets are practically untouched. The houses are poorly lighted and aired. The families live huddled together in small rooms or in the corners of the houses. In many instances cows, buffaloes, goats and pigs live under the same roof, and occupy almost as much space as the family. There

are many mosquitoes; lice, fleas and other creatures exist. As a consequence there is much sickness. Skin diseases, "red eye," malaria and tuberculosis are prevalent. There are many blind people. Smallpox is quite common. Cholera breaks out from year to year, and frequently sweeps over the fields with appalling results.

From Mulberry Leaf to Reel of Silk

Rice, wheat, rape and beans are the main crops raised. Cultivation of the mulberry, on the leaves of which the silkworm feeds, raising silkworms and reeling raw silk also play a large part in the economic life of the people. In addition, the making of straw matting, straw shoes, willow baskets, embroidering silks and farming implements, and raising ducks and geese form means of earning a livelihood. Ducks and geese are raised by the thousands, and both fowls and eggs find a ready and profitable sale.

Education is negligible. The Mission formerly maintained six primary schools, but for financial and other reasons they were all discontinued. Our only effort now is a small six-year primary school for girls. The government conducts some rather good primary schools in the market towns, but the villages and hamlets are still neglected, so far as modern educational facilities are concerned.

In five of our nine principal outstations we own the church or chapel building; in four other places buildings are rented or borrowed for church purposes. There are two organized churches. The church membership is about 150, besides inquirers in each place. Our working force consists of three evangelists and two ordained preachers. A mobile force of three Bible women itinerates frequently throughout the entire field.

Hundreds of Hamlets Unreached by the Gospel

This entire field is distinctively a Presbyterian obligation; no other mission is at work in the area. It is practically virgin soil. Villages by the hundreds, easily accessible, remain unreached. Their need constitutes a clarion call for more financial support, and especially for Chinese evangelists.

O. C. CRAWFORD

RURAL LIFE WITHIN SIGHT OF THE CITY

Although Shanghai, the largest foreign settlement in the Orient, was among the earliest ports opened to foreign nations, the surrounding districts in the country have been less evangelized than many a far interior place in China. The city itself is so engrossing that the proportionally few missionaries in local work are kept in the city by the overwhelming opportunities at their doors. Of the

200 to 300 missionaries living in Shanghai by far the larger part are here for work on national committees and literary labors, for at Shanghai is located the oldest and largest printing and publishing house under mission control. Thus the country districts, though modified by contact with foreign ideas and commercial interests, remain without the Gospel and have no strong Christian churches.

Villages and Water Everywhere

The district which falls to the Presbyterian Church lies between the river and the sea. It is only twenty-five miles long by fifteen wide, yet it contains a half million population of thrifty farmer folk. Its villages are only a half mile to a mile apart. Groups of families dot the country as closely as houses in many a village of the west in America. Throughout this region is a network of canals which, with the footpaths between the tiny plots of well-tilled land, afford the principal avenues of travel.

Home life here is on a higher plane than in many parts of China where poverty presses heavily and old customs still hold a firm grip on the people. For the most part the farm and village homes are one-story brick, tile-roofed houses. The central room, as one enters, is found to be filled with farm produce, either grain or cotton and looms for weaving the cotton cloth used for clothing in summer and winter. In winter this is made of an outer and inner cotton cloth padded with cotton. The cloth also furnishes the material for heavy comfortables and pads for the beds. From rafters hang seed, grain and cobwebs, which are swept down only at New Year time. Bedrooms are added as sons bring their brides home, thus these country homes ramble on down the street until they accommodate from thirty to 300 souls, all bearing the same name. Both bedrooms and kitchens are dark, having only one window at most, and this is seldom opened, day or night. Beds are hung with curtains tightly drawn in winter to keep out the drafts and in summer to keep out the mosquitoes. One can draw his own conclusions as to the sanitation in such homes.

Family Life Within and Without

At seedtime and harvest both village and farm people go out into the fields, leaving only the feeble old and the tiny young to guard the homes while the family plants or gathers the cotton, wheat, rice or beans. Many farmers own their own land, some have enough land to rent to others, at a high rental; and some loan money—at 20 per cent to 30 per cent interest.

The patriarchal form of family life has a strong hold on

every phase of life; with it come many advantages and disadvantages. The control which a family exerts over its members maintains a stable community and welds the family into a co-operative whole with a fine spirit of mutual helpfulness, family affection and loyalty. On the other hand, the restrictions imposed on freedom of action greatly retard progress. A son who is earning money turns it into the family budget. Expenses of weddings and funerals become family and not individual burdens. Most people therefore are born in debt, and die in debt—debt not of their own making but debt which they must bear.

Most boys but few girls in our district are sent to school while too small to work in the fields or shops. But such is the mode of study that few of them learn enough to read a newspaper. In many villages a fine effort is being made to introduce modern schools. In two hamlets a series of one-story buildings have been erected, and furnished with desks, maps and windows. Pupils are graded and given physical drill, and many of the teachers have had some normal training. An eye to beauty is shown, the grounds admitting to a lotus pond or flower garden. In these towns there are also a library and a health station and clinic. Not a few of the better families have sent their children to Shanghai or even abroad for education.

Throughout this region for years many men have gone to Shanghai as employes in the business houses and families. During the past twenty years a large number of the women have gone there also, to work in the cotton, silk and match factories, though recently some factories have been built in the country, where the women can live under much better conditions while earning money.

New Days and New Opportunities

All these modifications of old-time customs carry with them great changes in home life and ambitions. Some of these are unfortunately far from improvement on the old, yet in this breaking up there is hope for better things. To the Christian Church now is the day of overwhelming opportunity. But the numbers of workers are very small; amid all this teeming, progressive multitude we have but one foreign and three Chinese preachers, and one foreign and four Chinese women to reach a half million souls! We ask for young men and women to come from America to pour the wealth of their devotion into this field of opportunity. —EMMA SILVER

YUNNAN'S VAST RURAL FIELD

Of the 12,000,000 inhabitants of Yunnan province practically

all live in villages. The whole province of Yunnan is therefore one vast rural mission field. The Presbyterian responsibility is a large region in the southwestern part of the province, with a population estimated at 2,000,000.

A Growing Church at Kiulungkiang

Kiulungkiang station was opened in 1917. There has been slow steady growth; communicants now number 195. The strength of the Church lies along several lines.

1. Education of Christians in reading and Bible study. Classes are held for men and women, literate and illiterate, each class meeting twice a week. The literate women and the older school pupils take their turns in leading services.

2. Self-support and self-government. A committee of leading Christians takes up all questions that involve the native church. They discuss freely and their findings are decisive. Through the work of this committee a number of church members promised to tithe. Also through their influence what amounts to compulsory school attendance has been instituted in the Christian village. The church supports its native pastor.

3. Self-propagation. There are two Mission-paid evangelists, but a number of other leaders are voluntarily giving their services on Sundays in teaching village groups. The majority of believers have been led to Christ by their Christian relatives and friends.

A Christian Constituency Six Days Long

At Yuankiang, occupied in 1922, three churches were recently organized. The present total membership is 432. The twenty-four elders ordained over these churches live in fourteen different villages. The number of villages where Christians live is forty-one, the number of households 146. These are scattered along the Red river, six days' travel being required to reach all of them.

Six Chinese and four Tai co-workers are employed throughout the year in the three departments of work at Yuankiang. A number of other Tai workers are employed part of the year. The strength of the churches inheres in the elders and other unpaid leaders. Much of the preparation of catechumens for church membership is done by local leaders without pay. In the various groups Sunday services are conducted by voluntary leaders. Bible school is held in two centers three times a year for a period of one month.

A New Village for a New Life

In the Kiulungkiang field non-Christians strongly oppose anyone's remaining in their villages after becoming Christians. At

first all believers had to move to the Christian village near the Mission compound. This prevented Christianity spreading as it would have done if each Christian family had been a nucleus in his own village. In Muang Ham this handicap was overcome by sending a native evangelist to settle there. He could not start a Christian community in any of the existing villages, but when several families were ready to take a stand he founded a new village. Though there has been opposition and attempted persecution, the district realizes that the Christians are there to stay, and there has been steady growth. Witchcraft is common, and one accused of it is defenseless. When his possessions have been confiscated, he becomes fertile soil for Christian teaching. Many such sufferers become faithful Christians.

They Keep Buffaloes in the Cellar

The above two stations are widely separated. Kiulungkiang station, embracing a population of 700,000, is in the southwestern part of the province. Yuankiang, with a population of 300,000, is in the northeast. The two stations are sixteen travel days apart.

What constitutes a home in such a rural district as Yuankiang? A mud hut with a flat roof, sometimes of one story, sometimes two. If one story, the pigs, geese, ducks and chickens sleep in the living room, which may also be the kitchen, and in which the rice huller is kept. If a two-story house, buffaloes, cattle and pigs are kept on the ground floor, while the fowls usually roost on the same floor with the family. To get into one of these houses one often has to step on stones from the front door to the stairs, past unspeakable mire, and climb the stairs in semi-darkness. The sun never gets into this ground room, so the mud never dries. This is where the buffaloes and pigs stay at night. Everything is taken into the house, to protect it from thieves. The people are all farmers, so the water buffalo is a necessary part of the family. The children care for this animal, and the women mostly care for the pigs. The women are always busy. They grow the cotton, spin and weave the clothes they wear and all the thread they use. The people dress in dark blue or black, and they do their own dyeing. The babies are carried on the back, tied on so that they can sleep peacefully. Wives are bought and sold like animals.

A Long Day for a Busy Housewife

The day's work starts about 4 A.M., when the wife gets up, hulls the rice for the day, cooks the feed for the pigs, gets the meal for the family. During the long days when they work in

the rice fields the people eat three meals a day; on short days, two. The men prepare the fields, plowing and harrowing in the water, and the women do a great deal of the planting. They all work at the harvesting.

The homes are not sanitary. Dirt floors are the rule, although there are some board floors. Children and dogs play around on the floors together. The homes have low tables and benches, not often scrubbed. The people sleep on hard boards or reed beds, with a mat over the boards, and each one rolls up separately in his blanket. All cooking is done over an open fire. Water-pipes are smoked freely.

Honor for Women and Even for Girls

The home life of the Tai Lu, in Kiulungkiang field, is, of course, based on marriage. Polygamy is rare, but divorce is easy and frequent; one of the older Christian women states that she had thirteen husbands before she became a Christian. Such easy-divorce conditions greatly weaken the good influences of home life. But the women are more nearly on an equality with the men among the Tai people than in any other non-christian land. Girls are usually as welcome as boys; The Tai Lu are a children-loving people. It is significant that on the arrival of the first child the parents often lose their own names and are from then on called merely father and mother of that child. One seldom hears of children being abused, though their physical welfare is sadly neglected through ignorance, and infant mortality is high. The work of the Tai household is divided rather equitably among men, women and children, each according to his strength. The women never plow, but they help in the other field work, pound rice, spin and weave and carry water.

Good Points Bad in Sanitation

Malaria, tuberculosis, various skin diseases and ulcers, eye diseases, and bladder stones are the most important health problems of Kiulungkiang. Leprosy is so common that a local proverb says: "Every village has its leper, every country has its lazy man." One hundred and thirty lepers are in the local leper colony, and there are hundreds more who have not come in.

The sanitation of the Tai Lu of Kiulungkiang region is not all one desires, but is infinitely better than that of the Tai and Chinese farther north. There are no cities; a village of more than fifty houses is the exception, and the houses are built up from the ground, with floors and walls of split bamboo, so that the entrance of some fresh air is inevitable. The personal habits of

the Tai Lu are much more sanitary than those of the Chinese; they bathe frequently, winter and summer, and make some effort to keep clean.

Yuankiang field, far to the north, is comparatively free from two diseases which are peculiarly fatal in the tropics, rabies and leprosy. Preventive measures are taken against the former for dog meat is a real delicacy. Reasons for the freedom from leprosy are less easily evolved. Otherwise the maladies of Yuankiang are comparable to those found throughout the tropics. Health and sanitation, in principle and practice, are made conspicuous by their absence in this locality.

Much Production for Home Consumption

Life in the region of Kiulungkiang is essentially primitive and rural. Practically every man is a farmer whose chief crop is rice. Unirrigated rice is grown on the mountain sides, but the bulk of the supply comes from the irrigated fields on the plains. Tea and cotton are grown in some sections. Tobacco, peanuts, sugar cane, limes, oranges, bananas, peaches, grapes, papayas, pineapples and garden vegetables are available in season, but there is nothing aside from rice, tea and cotton raised on a really commercial scale.

Each household supports a variety of industries, aside from gardening and farming. When the cotton is available, it is purchased as it comes from the field, and all the processes from field to finished garments are performed with crude homemade implements in the home. Most households own a number of chickens, a pig or two and perhaps some cows or a buffalo. Almost every village has a silversmith who does duty as banker by pounding any surplus of silver coins into bracelets or belts. These articles are more easily protected from thieves than the money could be.

Industries are frequently carried on by entire villages. Some villages are famed for the pottery they make, others produce most of the local sugar or limes or oranges; some raise pineapples, others make whisky. Some collect rocks and burn lime from them, while others produce most of the woven bamboo mats and the thatch which every house needs.

Harvests Both Summer and Winter

Rice is the staple food product at Yuankiang also. Farming is carried on in an intensive form, with planting under irrigation but without rotation of crops. When sufficient water is available rice is harvested twice yearly, in June and November. Sugar cane is planted in sandy soil not well adapted to rice cultivation. This

cane is harvested yearly in January. The sugar is carried only to the first stage of refining, and is then sold in small round discs.

Education Is Christianization

At Yuankiang the Mission conducts two schools. The mission school in Kiulungkiang teaches the children of the Tai people, who are related to the people of Siam and of Burma. It is still in the primary or elementary class, and is coeducational. Outside of the mission school there are no schools, as such, in the whole region. One would think with such opportunities as the mission school offers, that it would be crowded with children. But Buddhist people relinquish their religion very slowly. All understand that any child who enters the school will be taught Christianity.

THE CALL OF THE VILLAGES IN SHANTUNG

China—the new and the old, new cities and old villages, new modes and old customs, a new religion and old superstitions—China interests, baffles, and rouses us to meet both the new and the old. Modern medicine is overcoming superstitions, and the way of Christ is gradually breaking up the old custom-bound worship of idols, but the change is slow; and in the interior villages one meets more of the old than of the new.

Vows and Coins to Cure Diseases

Superstitious practices for curing diseases are not at an end in China. The local temple of "earth and heaven" is almost universally visited in cases of illness, and a vow is made to offer paper and incense in case of recovery. A tall bronze tablet in the temple court of "The Princess of Colored Clouds" at the summit of the sacred mountain, Tai Shan, has had the characters on the lower part almost obliterated by pilgrims rubbing the old-time, small, square-holed cash upon it. The coin is then supposed to be effective in preventing children's diseases, and is worn on a string around the neck.

A common explanation of sore eyes is that one has moved some article in the house, or moved a wall in which some spirit was residing. The cure is to sprinkle the courtyard with water. In a village in northern Shantung recently visited, in spite of the great prevalence of sore eyes, the number who came for eye medicine was surprisingly small. We learned that all had made vows to a little soapstone idol in the outer wall of a house, to the effect that if cured they would burn incense or paper, or give it a new red paper dress. One horn of the idol is lacking. A passing carter suddenly craved soapstone, took out this idol, bit off the horn and

went on. Although it could not protect itself, this bit of soapstone is called on for all of the local eye cases!

We visited one temple entrance where, on the outstretched hand of one of the guardian idols, a massive figure of a man about ten feet high, were hung a number of bows, about six inches across, made of dried sticks and strings. These were gifts for healing goiter and glandular trouble. From this same temple I got a fantastic doglike clay figure which had fallen from a roof. The story goes that a certain ruler proclaimed his uncle to be a god, so he made this figure to put on temple roofs, there to be a "god above gods." He has a widespread reputation for curing children's diarrhea. Frequently in temples are idols for curing all manner of diseases. One method is to rub the part of the idol corresponding to the part of the body diseased.

Immortality Through Fasting

There is a group, numerous among China's country women, who hope by fasting and practicing the austerities of an ascetic to attain immortality. The extreme is found among a small number of unmarried girls who give themselves wholly to sitting in passivity, and practically starving themselves to death at an early age by this rigid fast. A pagoda was built in honor of one who sat for three years in extreme passivity, not speaking at all, except once in a while to her followers—who even before she died burned incense and paper before her. At death she spoke to one of her disciples, telling her that although she had done her best to find the true God, the way ahead was dark, and she was afraid. She had not found the way. She told her followers to seek other beliefs. However they still burn incense before her shrine.

Fruits of the Trees as Gifts to the Gods

The rules about fasting vary. Some fast only on the first and fifteenth days, and then refrain from eating meat. Others never eat meat, fish or certain vegetables, as onions and leeks. We recently visited a village where about ten unmarried girls follow these practices. These worshippers have in their homes a corner curtained off for a shrine. On the table, before which is a prayer mat, stand three or four wooden tablets bearing the names of several deities. Before them, arranged in rows most orderly and artistically, are saucers of fruits in season, various kinds of food, and incense burners. These things must be bought, so the already scant diet of the family must of necessity be the more scant as a result. I gave the Christian woman who came to escort us to the home of her neighbor, a most devout leader of this group, a few

ripe olives. The Christian, with a generosity that is characteristic, shared the olives with her neighbor. I saw the latter bow in worship as she quickly put the olives on the saucer, an offering to the wooden tablet-god.

A Village Maiden in Quest of the Truth

A girl dressed in clean freshly starched white mourning blouse and trousers, in mourning for her mother, came just at dusk to our rooms. Her speech was like that of an educated person; her face was unusually attractive, but her tiny bound feet told us she was a non-Christian.

"Tell me your religion," she said directly. "If it is true I will believe. I, too, worship only 'Tien Lao Yeh' " (the non-Christian term for God). "I, also, am an unmarried girl. I have given myself, and all that the world can give, to seek to know God. But I have no peace—tell me your religion."

In answer to our questions she let us know that she could read. This was even more surprising, for in country areas, in non-Christian homes, girls ordinarily are not educated, and in the Chinese social order for one to take the vows she had taken is decidedly uncommon. She did not sit in passivity, or fast, or have a shrine in her home. She offered to God a cup of tea three times daily.

We asked what progress she was making in coming to know God. She said: "The longer and harder I seek, the more despairingly hopeless it is. I must have peace!"

I shall long remember her eagerness and joy and the quick spiritual understanding with which she received the story of Jesus that we gladly told her. It was absolutely new to her, and she listened hungrily. She left us promising to pray.

Thousands of Villages Calling—and Waiting

Villages in China are legion. Four thousand are in our 'Tsingtao field, a comparatively small territory. Life in the villages is the life of old China. It is now most receptive and open, waiting—waiting for Christ.

The roads to the villages are many and long
There are roads of toil and roads of song
But the Master's beside, all things to share—
The roads to the villages are roads of prayer.
The call of the villages sounds o'er the din
Of poverty, ignorance, sickness and sin
To hearts that to love and to Jesus are true
The call of the villages I send—to you!

—F. IRENE FORSYTHE



